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Hon. T.S. Ellis III, Senior Judge
United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia
701 E Broad St
Richmond, VA 23219

Re: Mark W. Visconi, Letter of Support

Dear Judge Ellis:

It is my obligation, as a friend and colleague of Col Mark Visconi, to tell you what I know (and did not know) about him to help inform the important decisions that you have to make about his future. I am a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army and have known Mark for 16 years. The Olmsted Foundation selected us both, a year apart in the early 2000s, to study in Egypt in a Master's degree program at American University in Cairo to build the Department of Defense's subject matter expertise in the Middle East.

Although the Olmsted Foundation had a policy of not placing two Scholars at the same school, they made an exception in our case since the Middle East had so few countries where Scholars could study because of the threat to Americans. Many of our colleagues studied in developed countries but Mark and his family deserve great credit for choosing a developing country where life was more difficult but where his study of the Arabic language and Middle Eastern culture would have more value in helping our senior military leaders make decisions. I was a single Captain, at the time, and had an easier time picking up and moving.

Mark's language skills, cultural understanding and patience also helped him develop rapport with the Iraqi pilots who he later trained in combat while assigned to a special operations unit, in Iraq, that built capacity within the Iraqi Air Force. He flew operational missions with his counterparts and, undoubtedly, gave them the courage and skill set they needed to fight for their country by setting the example himself. Mark's assignment to Air Force Special Operations Command came as no surprise to me since he seemed good at everything he did.

While stationed in Cairo in 2003- 2004, Mark and his current ex-wife Tania both represented America extremely well. They hosted a Thanksgiving dinner at their home- something I would later do as a Defense Attache- for this almost uniquely American holiday and invited friends from Egypt, America and other countries represented at the university to expose them to American culture while in the company of friends. These and countless other kind gestures, helpful conversations, introductions and good deeds helped me to quickly adapt to life in Egypt and take advantage of opportunities to learn that optimized this incredible opportunity.

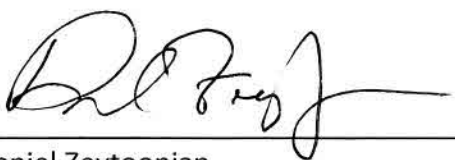
Mark and I participated in this program at the beginning of the latest war in Iraq, in 2003, which did not enjoy the support of most of the Arab world. Mark's affable nature, intelligence and empathy, however, allowed him to discuss controversial U.S. foreign policy positions in classes full of skeptical students. His non-threatening manner promoted greater understanding among groups of students who held opposing views. His professors and peers alike marveled at his humility, positive nature and ability to connect with people. Nobody felt like a stranger, let alone an enemy, talking to Mark. He was and is a genuinely warm person who cares about others, and he was an excellent representative of America during the Visconis' tour in Egypt.

For me personally, Mark set the example. He oriented me to Cairo, the U.S. embassy and the university, showed me how he conducted himself as an Olmsted Scholar, and introduced me to his family and friends over dinner, at his home, so that I would feel more at home. In addition to becoming a good ambassador from the U.S., he also became a good friend. Later in our careers, after I got married (in Cairo), our wives would meet and our families would become close. Our careers intersected a couple of times in Washington, D.C. and Katie and I felt fortunate to see Mark and Tania again each time as we all had become good friends.

We knew something had gone wrong by the end of 2015 (or early 2016), as we were leaving for Dushanbe (or had just arrived), when Mark's assignment to command at Andrews Air Force Base got canceled. We respected the Visconis' privacy and did not ask about it and then we learned that Tania and the kids had moved to Colorado. I reached out to Mark after we returned to D.C. in July 2018 but did not hear back from him. Finally, after working through Tania, I got his current phone number and we met for dinner in early fall of 2019. He did not mention anything about this criminal case so, when a mutual friend sent me the link to a media story a couple of months later, I was shocked.

I cannot reconcile the crimes Mark has committed with the person who I know. I do not offer any excuses for what he has done and find it all reprehensible. Moreover, I just do not understand it. As his friend though, I would offer this: If you think that Mark can be treated and rehabilitated, you should offer him the chance to make amends with those who he has wronged, play some role in the lives of his kids, and use his considerable talents and hard work to become a productive member of society again. I will be a part of his support team to help him do this and to move forward. Through his service to our nation in combat and peacetime, and because he is, at heart, a good person, I think that, as long as he does not pose a threat to anybody, that he has earned a second chance. Thank you for your consideration and this opportunity to be heard. I am always available to discuss anything in this letter at my mobile phone number above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daniel Zeytoonian', written over a horizontal line.

Daniel Zeytoonian